Tracing the Historical Roots of Madhubani Art and Cultural Labour: A Socio-Historical and Empirical Inquiry (1970-2020)

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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It is the work that is expected to be carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Rashee Singh** and co-supervision of **Dr. Nibedita Hazarika.**

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ABSTRACT

This research endeavours to trace the historical development of Madhubani art (1970-2020). This work utilizes an analytical framework of cultural labour. It assimilates folk art history and labour studies together. It displays the socio-political dynamics of Madhubani region. It attempts to explore the process by which Madhubani painting transformed from a ritual-centric art to global art economy.

The foundation of the methodology is on re-analysis of archive and oral history with the use of wide-ranging field work. It examines the condition of low caste women artist how they play an important role to shape this art tradition. It also investigates the intervention of the Indian Government and the Craft Council since 1970s. How these institutions helped to provide recognition globally.

It also examines the impact of liberalization which includes migration and cosmopolitan aesthetics. It redefines the key theme of the art work and market orientation. It assimilates the various aspects such as caste, state policy and preservation of folk art form. It showcases the intricacy between artistic tradition and contemporary market transformations.

It offers the cultural transformation of narrative in postcolonial India. It is also emphasizing how women artisans changed the definition of Madhubani painting within their social communities as a space of creativity, resistance and empowerment.

Key Words: Madhubani Art, Culture, Labour, Folk Art.

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1. Introduction

Background and Context

Madhubani art is also recognized as Mithila art. It plays the essential role in the traditional Indian folk art. This art is produced by the upper caste women such as Brahmin. But later on the other caste also started to make paintings. This art played a central role in the lives. Majorly, it can be used as ornamental element which glorifies the walls and floors.

Women carefully preserve this art form. The artistic skill passes from one generation to the next. It helps in understanding community connections as well as individual identity. After independence, this art gained recognition and established its own distinctive place in society. The art has undergone several changes. In 1960s feminine, it was formed on walls. After that, the artists started to create this art form on paper to preserve it.

This study will help us to understand how Madhubani art has transformed from a cultural labor perspective between 1970 and 2020. It has various implications for its socio-economic development. It has undergone historical changes due to several factors, including institutionalization, commercialization, and globalization. These changes have impacted the aesthetic quality of the artwork. It has raised questions about the economic stability and cultural identity of the artists. How do people construct their identity through this art form? The establishment of the "All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB)", under the leadership of *PupulJayakar* and with the collaboration of individuals like *Bhaskar Kulkarni*. They provided opportunities to the artist for creating and selling unique Madhubani paintings on paper.

This study marked the first step towards the commercialization of Madhubani painting. But also, it brought a lens to understand the perspective of transformation in Madhubani art. How these paintings were viewed and practiced. It moved away from its roots, which were deeply embedded in traditional practices of mural art and religious rituals. It became a commercially produced and profitable art form that could be sold in urban centers as well as in the global market.

At the time of this transition, many of the leading artists of *Madhubani* painting emerged, including *Jagdamba Devi*, *Sita Devi*, Mahasundari Devi, and, later the likes of *Baua Devi* and

Dulari Devi, and each of these women served as key players in the continuing development and evolution of *Madhubani* painting by adding new stories and aesthetic ideas to the body of work.

Institutionalization and Globalization

Since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the emergence of the international art market, new opportunities have opened up for Madhubani artists, such as international exhibitions, cultural diplomacy, and tourism. Along with these new opportunities, these developments have made Madhubani art a part of India's 'soft power'. There are now numerous examples of artists such as *Dulari Devi* and *Baua Devi* appearing on UNESCO lists and in international museums and films. Their exposure through these media has allowed them to expand notoriety and have access to financial resources. It has also introduced new levels of complexity into the relationship between these artists and the public. Who has the authority to represent *Madhubani*? Who creates the narrative? Who has the power to set the prices and control the distribution?

The contribution that nonprofit organizations provide to “empowering women” and helping them to find their voice through creative activities is an area that requires further examination. This study seeks to document both the positive effects and the natural barriers to (Globalization) associated with the transformation of *Madhubani* artists.

Research Scope and Relevance

There are many valid reasons for limiting the timeframe of this current study from 1970 to 2020. First, the long time period of 50 years allows us to examine the artistic history of *Madhubani* in depth, particularly how it evolved from being an important ritualistic wall decoration to being a commodified art form that continues to be produced and bought in the modern market. Second, the timeframe of this study reflects the growing role of both governmental and non-governmental organizations, as they help to shape how and where this art form will continue to develop and be received within the broader social context.

Thirdly, this research reflects the evolution of India from an economy based on developmentalist ideas in the 1970s to a neoliberal capitalist economy since the 1990s and now to one that is characterized by cultural nationalistic themes in the 2010s.

The principal geographical focus of this research is *Madhubani* and *Darbhanga* districts, which are part of the state of *Bihar* in India; the research includes the examination of two villages, *Jitwarpur* and *Ranti*, and also takes into consideration urban centres including *Delhi, Mumbai* and *Patna,* which are home to a variety of cultural events, markets, and policy discussions. This research method is based on an examination of individual artists through detailed case studies, which will be used to enhance knowledge of cultural labour in relation to the artistic tradition. Incorporating multiple methodologies such as oral history, field research, and archival research is crucial for successfully integrating the experiences and perspectives of marginalized artists into the broader academic discourse, leading to a more nuanced understanding of their work.

Academically, this project serves a complete purpose across various fields, including but not exclusive to: Art History; Labour Studies; Women's Studies; Anthropology and Cultural Policy. As such, it provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary conversation and interactions within these diverse areas through the building on of existing academic literature in the area, as well as seeks to build upon the building of a new body of literature that will challenge previously established or heritage-based narratives and emphasize the importance of critically examining Labour relations and structures of Power, Social Justice, etc. This research provides policymakers with important information about the complex process of creating and maintaining cultural heritage, as well as how best to support cultural practitioners in achieving these goals.

Commodification and the Aesthetic Dilemma

The issue of commoditizing the art historical identity of *Madhubani* painting has become a serious and complicated problem in our modern era.

By focusing on the artist's choices, this research aims to challenge the dualistic thinking of tradition and modernity, while also demonstrating that artists often have to express themselves within the frameworks created by neo-liberalism. This study highlights the challenges faced by contemporary artists. But also, it demonstrates how the economic environment influences cultural

expression. In turn, this research could spark a broader discussion about how traditional art forms can be preserved in today's consumer-driven world.

A growing number of artists are being forced to operate under a system that is increasingly controlled by profit-driven goals. The outcomes of this study will help identify ways artists can actively negotiate their identity and values while continuing to participate in an increasingly commodified arts marketplace.

Documentation, Archives, and the Absence of Artists' Voices

The way in which *Madhubani* art has been preserved, organized and assessed by different people (such as historians, art historians and curators) without much input from the artists themselves is another major area of focus for this study. Art catalogues, museum exhibitions and academic articles will often provide a romanticized view of the art within the context of how it fits within a narrative that views it as one of the last few pieces of a 'pure' cultural heritage. The absence of artists being quoted, identified by name or given credit for their contributions to the field of art and culture in the context of these narratives is very surprising. The disregard for the artists as a group in these narratives is more than just a minor mistake; rather, it is deep-rooted within the traditional hierarchy of values, where oral traditions are considered to be inferior to formal written texts, and folk art is seen purely as a form of raw material that can be exploited and interpreted by the cultural elite.

Madhubani artists receive several opportunities through exhibitions, sales, and published reviews worldwide. However, the qualities of narration are often ignored. Furthermore, while statements are prepared to document and contextualize the artists' work, curatorial interpretations frequently emerge that can alter the significance of the artist's original intent. This research will also involve prominent institutions such as the Crafts Museum, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), and the Lalit Kala Akademi.

This work will address two questions: "Whose stories are valued/ ignored?" and "How have caste and gender been incorporated (or not) into curatorial practices?"

Towards a Feminist and Subaltern Aesthetics

Women were the first to practice and maintain the tradition of Madhubaniart and continue to play a significant role increasing the artwork. The common theme of the study focuses on how women contribute to this form of art is often unnoticed by the dominant storylines of our culture. Feminist aesthetics aims to critically engage with the political and material aspects of women's creativity by going beyond a simplistic celebration of their influences to provide a holistic view of artistic creation and presentation. The feminist analysis of Madhubaniart will look at how economic factors and patriarchal culture influence the women's contributions to the art form, both artistically (i.e. how women are represented in those artworks) and in the ways those artworks are received in different cultural perspectives.

At the same time, by recognising the perspective of the subaltern, we recognize that most *Madhubani* artists, particularly those from underprivileged castes, successfully investigate multiple dimensions of both the aesthetics of art production and the social exclusion that accompanies being an artist. Of course, there are frequent trials and boundaries associated with being an artist, especially if one must struggle with both the aesthetic and socio-economic components involved in creating art. Most of the works formed by these artists involve themes of struggle, resistance, and negotiation to some degree, and they reflect their active approach toward the political realities that surround them. Irrespective of whether they include the visual narratives based on rich mythological stories or the recent protests and movements, the artists' work is influenced by their experiences and the economic conditions that produce their status.

Based on the above statement, the methodological approach in this research will be feminist, participatory, and decolonial. This study will highlight the diversity of women's experiences in the field of art, and will also document the artistic works that emerge from those experiences.The study will also aim to document the lived experience of being a woman, a worker, and an artist in India during this time of significant societal change.

This study will address the following questions: How has tradition been reinterpreted and transformed by these artists, and what are the implications for our understanding of cultural heritage and identity today?

How do artists innovate without institutional support? How do artists construct meaning from physicality, material culture, and community context?

Conclusion: Locating *Madhubani* within a Broader Cultural Economy

The historical progression of *Madhubani* art between 1970 and 2020 can be recognized through the complex and sometimes conflicting course of the evolution of traditional forms of expression, identity, and the role of artists in maintaining the art forms. The progression of the art form also requires a detailed description of the development of an entire international network for placing a unique, locally produced form of art into the greater context of an expanding global culture market and for recognizing the impact of the individuals who continue to contribute to the existence of *Madhubani* art beyond simply being the keepers of a tradition but rather who are active contributors.

The purpose of this introductory section is to create a detailed and comprehensive framework. It is based on empirical study which includes historic events of time, and describing the institutional actors involved. It has been stated that the study requires us to move beyond superficial judgments of beauty. But also look at the complex relationships between labour, power and individual choice through art.

It has a profound impact on scholarly discussions. It deals with key intellectual ideas among art history, cultural and development studies. It will propose new ways of thinking about how traditional forms of knowledge are valued. How the contributions of cultural workers are acknowledged and recognized.

2. Literature Review

Origins and Early Documentation

W.G. Archer published the first significant report on Maithil painting, or Madhubani painting, in Marg magazine in 1949. This report referenced as one of the earliest engagements with this art form by a Western scholar. Archer's research emphasized the concepts of "authenticity" and "primitivism." It was the central idea to his analysis of each painting. He examined the religious significance and unique styles of this art form. Most importantly, his study was influenced by a colonial perspective on culture. (Archer, 1949).

The All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB) played a crucial role in developing the documentation of folk arts. PupulJayakar and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay attempted to involve rural artisans in cultural revival programs. Bhaskar Kulkarni, one of the most active field workers of the AIHB, helped teach women in Jitwarpur village to create these paintings on handmade paper during the Bihar famine of 1966-67.

Gendered Labour and the Role of Women Artists

Most of the Madhubani paintings are done by the women. It is considered as an important area of feminist research. Various scholars described these women are "carriers" of tradition and culture. Contemporary scholars examine in greater depth how gender has manifested itself. Kumar (2020) discusses feminist interpretations of this painting style. It is suggesting that the artistic activity of creating art, rather than being merely a medium for individual creativity. It becomes a means for women to express the realities of their daily lives through their art.

Artworks created by women have demonstrated ways in which they can express their personal and shared life experiences. It also depicts that the everyday oppression they face such as patriarchy, gender and dowry and many more. Women's creative work has often been considered a private aspect of their lives. These artistic creations are primarily produced within the home.

Cultural Labour and the Market Economy

Existing scholarly work has not adequately explored *Madhubani* Painting from the standpoint of Cultural Labour as both an economizing and ideological practice based on the premises of Marxism, feminism and Cultural Studies. The term Cultural Labour includes all activity, whether visible or hidden, that results in the creation, reproduction, transmission and marketing of Indigenous Traditional Forms. The work of Bourdieu (1984) and Williams (1981) has demonstrated how the value systems that are embedded within the field of cultural work have produced and continue to produce systematic forms of inequality.

In India, the artwork produced by folk artists is often portrayed as 'the heritage' of society, and the economic insecurity of the folk artist has been overlooked/forgotten. Gupta (2017) highlights that while *Madhubani* painting is exhibited and sold through a number of large art galleries(Kamarappa) and through exhibitions sponsored by government agencies, the amount of money actually paid to the artist is very small.

Representation, Institutions, and Global Circuits

Madhubani art is an significant area of study in terms of its international recognition. Artists like Baua Devi, Godavari Dutt, and Dulari Devi are appreciated. They have had the opportunity to showcase their work at international venues in cities such as Paris, Tokyo, Delhi, and New York. Exhibitions in these locations have contributed to the increasing reputation of this art form. This recognition has brought the artists' work to a wider audience worldwide. Unfortunately, access to these global cultural networks is not equally distributed across the globe.

The systems used to curate art, as described by Jain (2004) and more recently by Sengupta (2019), often include a process called "gatekeeping." There are certain categories (such as mythology, rural life, and nature) that are favoured over others (such as caste violence and discrimination) during the curation process, which causes an "aesthetic filter" through which artists must pass through to be included in showings or catalogues. Additionally, even within national museums, the criteria for selecting works for display frequently reflect the institutional bias that favors upper caste narratives.

In addition, there is an increased amount of research on the impact of the UNESCO designation of traditional artworks and their effects. Desai 2021 said that “although the designation may bring distinctions and funding, these designations may also impose certain limitations on what constitutes authenticity, which may limit the potential of the artwork's evolution from a living tradition to a static cultural object”.

Cultural Production and the Role of the State

The Indian state has often played an important Historic Role in preserving, defining and distributing traditional art forms. After independence, cultural policy was built around the idea of National Unity, with Folk and Tribal Arts being viewed as authentic expressions of India that could create a sense of unity in the diversity that existed in India. As noted by scholars such as parthachatterjee (1993), state-sponsored development has used tradition to create an idealized "Indian Ethic" by choosing specific Cultural Forms to promote.

Cultural institutions such as Lalit Kala Akademi, Crafts Council of India, and Handicrafts Board have influenced *Madhubani* art in a positive manner; the organizations helped to promote the visibility of rural women artists, while simultaneously helping maintain existing systems of hierarchy and traditional aesthetic styles. The primary belief within these organizations was that it was the responsibility of the folk art to remain 'the same' and therefore not allow for any changes in artistic expression in order to preserve a 'pure culture'. This dichotomous situation creates a core tension between the necessities for 'authenticity' through a static art-form with the necessity for 'market accessibility' through a dynamic art-form. Cultural production around *Madhubani* art carries both of these tensions.

In his 2009 writing, Sethi describes how government organizations set expectations on the definition of Good *Madhubani* paintings (i.e. Government definitions). For example, approved criteria for *Madhubani* are to use natural character pigments; use of mythological content; and adhere to predetermined classifications of styles (such as Bharni or Kachni). By using these defined criteria for filtering *Madhubani* artists and their artwork, institutions have effectively marginalized those artistic works that do not fit into the approved governmental definitions. Artists who identify as other than Dalit or non-Brahmin often have their creative expression

limited because they produce new and innovative forms or themes. Such filters raise questions about which aesthetic voices and expressions receive formal institutional support and validation, and which aesthetic voices and expressions are excluded from formal institutional archives.

Awards, honors, awards like the National Award, the Shilp Guru title and UNESCO's top-tier listing have also been instrumental in elevating niche and even obscure artists onto a more global stage; however, they provide increasing opportunities for emergence of a broader, more complex world of competition as well as a more extensive hierarchy amongst the various types of crafts and craftspeople that are now available to the general public. There are few studies available to date that provide an analysis of the criteria for selection, jury functions or resources needed for the eventual establishment of legitimacy, and this research intends to address the deficiencies created by these types of institutional limitations by examining how local or regional artists obtain and are denied legitimacy.

Tourism, Craft Fairs, and the Neoliberal Turn

The liberalization policies introduced in the Indian economy in the early 1990s. It has significantly altered the framework of how people perceive traditional Indian art forms. The expansion of craft fairs such as the Surajkund Mela, Delhi Haat, and Shilpgram. It has provided opportunities for the commercialization and marketing of folk arts. These festivals are supported by state tourism boards and cultural institutions.

As Sharma (2015) mentioned that, this is a consequence of the neoliberal restructuring of the craft sector. This has created several new vulnerabilities and risk factors for artists in new environment. These include considerable expenses for the artists; registration fees, transportation costs. And also, it required a strong social network. With these changes of craft fairs creates another constraint for the artists. This puts pressure on them to create commercially viable art rather than complex, story-based artworks.

Madhubani art has now become a tourist souvenir. It alters the cultural value of the artwork. For connoisseurs of traditional art forms, this process of commercialization raises several questions about it. How globalization shape our understanding towards traditional art forms. However, tourism has brought economic opulence for the artist. Ramaswamy (2011) argues that when

artists become viewed as service providers and spectators become viewed as passive consumers, the dialogue that has historically characterized folk art and is essential to community is lost. The purpose of this research is to engage in interviews with artists who have been involved in the craft fairs discussed in this article and examine their understanding of the changes in their roles and the dynamics of their audience.

Intergenerational Transmission and Shifting Pedagogies

The *Madhubani* painting's method of transmission has previously been oral and performance-based, as well as aligned with matrilineal relationships and community ceremonies. Daughters learned from watching their mothers paint walls during festivals or ceremonies; they learned not only the art techniques but also stories, symbols and songs related to that art. With the growing demand for *Madhubani* paintings, new ways of facilitating education and learning on this art are now available.

As a result, many organizations such as NGOs, craft training centres, and educational institutions now offer courses on *Madhubani* painting, specifically aimed at young girls. Many of these organisations have framed these programmes as part of a larger strategy of "Women's Empowerment" and "Skill Development." These organizations are both helping to maintain the *Madhubani* painting tradition and creating economic opportunities; however, they are also making professional, institutionalised practices out of what were historically informal, ritualistic ways of processing *Madhubani* painting.

Chattopadhyay's (2018) work examines how training centres support, by only promoting "classical" styles, while discouraging hybrid or experimental types of expressions using this art form, thus maintaining caste differences. As an example, many beginning Dalit (untouchable) artists face the dismissal of their thematic choices and techniques by instructors of the upper castes. This hierarchy in education reflects a larger societal divide and thus affects which styles of art are considered sellable and/or "real."

The present study aims to define how emergent *Madhubani* artists are learning this art form and investigates how these artists are interpreting this form from generation to generation; e.g., are they innovating, resisting, conforming to tradition, or re-imagine this art form? And what are the ways in which they balance the tension between the desire to respect tradition and their desire to

innovate? Understanding how these changes from one generation to the next occurs will be critical in determining how the future of *Madhubani* as both an artistic expression and as a traditional cultural practice will take place.

Folk Art, Feminism, and Decolonial Theory

In the context of Cultural Theory, there is growing interest in decolonizing the analysis of folk/tribal art. This means challenging Eurocentric frameworks for understanding authorship; aesthetics, and originality; as well as opposing narratives regarding Indian cultural heritage created by elites. This has led to the introduction of new ideas about representation, labour and resistance by Feminist and Subaltern theorists within Cultural Studies.

In an early essay by Spivak (1988) titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?", she raises an important issue for those studying artwork created by subaltern cultures, which is the topic of this chapter. That issue is the methodological question concerned with how the voice of the subaltern can be heard and represented without being taken over or silenced. Studies on *Madhubani* provide a specific case for discussion. Who produces the catalogues? Who conducts the interviews? Who puts the work of *Madhubani* artists in a broader context?

The concept of "aesthetic agency" was introduced by feminist scholar Nandini Chatterjee (2020) as a way for female artists from economically and politically oppressed or marginalized communities to conceptualize the ways they create visual art through their experiences with power.

Visual Methodologies and Participatory Research

One of the most significant movements and developments has been towards participatory visual methodologies. This involves the use of several ethnographic protocols and methods such as documentation, creation of visual images. Furthermore, the scholarship of Pink (2012) and Marcus (2008) has emphasized the need for 'multimodal ethnography,' It allows for the acceptance of all modes of knowledge production (such as drawing, photography, conversations, and interviews).

In addition to this, the use of Oral History techniques, including song, rituals and anecdotal narratives illustrate how oral history preserves and represents important aspects of the historic memory and symbolic nature of textual documentation.

Based on the extensive research and theoretical background discussed above, this study aims to use participatory research tools as a way of capturing not only the artistic products but also the complexity of the artist's creative process through field diaries; collaborative exhibitions; artist led workshops; and visual narratives. The goal of this work is not just to gather data for academics, but to create connections, build trust, and create an equitable scholarship that is open to different perspectives.

3. Description of Broad Research Area

The work presented in this academic research is found within an extensive and interdisciplinary framework of visual studies, and intersects with several other disciplines, including but not limited to Art History, Cultural Anthropology, Gender Studies, Subaltern Studies and Labour History. The focus of this research is primarily on folk art, and therefore, on the interplay between cultural labour and folk traditions, as well as exploring how the conditions of society - both politically, socially and economically - influence how *Madhubani* Art is perceived, practiced, and politicized in India today and to some extent in the future, as this field continues to evolve.

At the root of this line of investigation is a critical to understand that traditional arts do not exist as static artifacts laid out on pages of history, but rather serve as living representations of culture, work, and resistance that have continued to develop into today's society. The intent of this study is to illuminate the many intrinsic misconceptions related to folk and Indigenous art forms which label them as "primitive", "unchanging", or "merely decorative", thus minimizing their depths of complexity and relevance. The approach taken herein conceptualizes *Madhubani* Art as an intellectual and political entity that encompasses a multitude of connections to the history of time and place, regional identity and agency through gendered experiences; all of which reflect the lived experience of its makers.

The investigation of cultural production's evolving significance, from traditional rituals performed by rural women on the walls and floors to artwork on canvases that achieve international acclaim and come to define artist's identity and livelihood, further examines the impact of globalisation, tourism, the power of the state and the mediation of cultural institutions on the materiality of the artworks and the socio-political significance attached to them.

By utilizing the Feminist and Subaltern Theoretical Perspectives, the research furthers the Critical Re-evaluation of Aesthetics: The Labour of Art Production - In Particular, the Labour of Creating Art Undertaken by Violated Communities has historically been Under-Recognized/Devalued or Even Made invisible in Mainstream Discourse. This work offers a unique approach to developing cultural history, theoretical frameworks, and feminist

historiographical analysis. It also incorporates the experiences and voices of the artists themselves.

Key Themes in the Broad Research Area Include:

A key area of inquest in this field is the impact of post-independence cultural policies and institutions (including the AIHB, and NGOs) on the promotion, classification, and commercialization of these paintings. This inquiry focuses on how the Indian state and international development agencies construct narratives around the concepts of "authenticity," "tradition," and "cultural heritage."

Gender, Caste, and Artistic Practice

A significant area of study within the broader field of gender and caste in relation to artistic practice focuses on how women from Brahmin, Kayastha, and Dalit communities engage with the Madhubani art tradition in different ways.

4. Objective of the Study

1. To examine the historical transformation of *Madhubani* art from ritual wall paintings to commodified visual culture (1970–2020)
2. To examine the role of women, especially marginalized caste artists, in shaping *Madhubani* as cultural labour and social resistance
3. To assess the impact of state bodies, NGOs, and global markets on *Madhubani*'s aesthetics, value, and visibility.
4. To contribute to scholarly debates on cultural labour by foregrounding the lived experiences, oral histories, and creative agency of *Madhubani* artists.

5. Methodology

The research framework delineates the relationship of the four main research objectives to the methodologies and theoretical frameworks that were developed to study the objectives in this study. The first objective focuses on how the transformation of *Madhubani* from a ritualistic form of art to a commercialized art was learned and will use archives of government and non-government public policy records and institutional records, along with a review of the public conversations regarding *Madhubani* art over the last 50 years.

In order to address the second goal concerning the experiences of women artists living in marginalized communities, ethnographic fieldwork will be conducted in various areas that are important centres of *Madhubani* art. This research will document oral histories using semi-structured interviews and participant observation to highlight how caste, gender and labour intersect in the practice of art. A complete critical analysis of the visual and textual artifacts created as part of these exhibition events (catalogues, brochures, audio/visual materials) will be performed systematically and comprehensibly to uncover historical significance and implications.

To achieve the objective of the third objective, this study will conduct systematic observational research into the complex operations of the art market in different sales environments (e.g. Delhi Haat, Cottage Industries Emporium, a type of private gallery) as well as digital platforms for example, Amazon Karigar and Gaatha to guarantee an exhaustive look into how these dynamics affect artists and their artwork.

6. Expected Outcomes

The findings of the analysis will include contextual reference points with narratives and interview content produced from the field to illustrate the contributions and experiences of the Subaltern and the underrepresented.

The primary goal of this research will be an in-depth exploration of how *Madhubani* Art has evolved through interactions with a wide range of influences, including but not limited to tradition, market demands, governmental action, caste, feminist thought, etc. By creating a new theoretical framework by which to study *Madhubani* Art, the intent is to demonstrate that the practice of the artist, family and community provides an infinite number of opportunities to incorporate aspects from one culture into that of another and thus provide insight into the artistic process. The objective is to illustrate that while the history of *Madhubani* Arts has been a traditional legacy, the current historical context provides an almost infinite possibility for continued development of artistic expression through the influences of current culture.

The expected results of this research include a large collection of oral histories and ethnographic accounts collected through extensive engagement with and relationship-building with female artists, local arts advocates, and community leaders in the Jitwarpur and Ranti places. These first-person accounts will document the practice, struggles, and changes of these artists through time—from when the government began to intervene in the community in the 1970s to today with an international and global presence through exhibitions in galleries, festivals, etc. These important qualitative resources will serve as a cultural archive for future academics, practitioners, and organizations to better understand and build upon their activities.

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Ajit Kumar
Registration No. MRUEDDN012K230054

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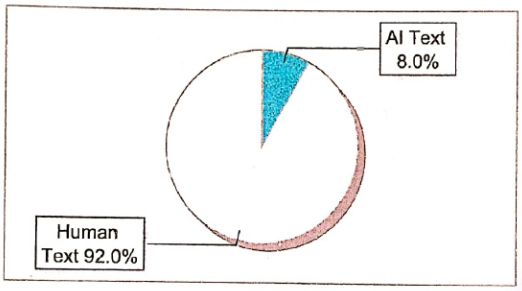

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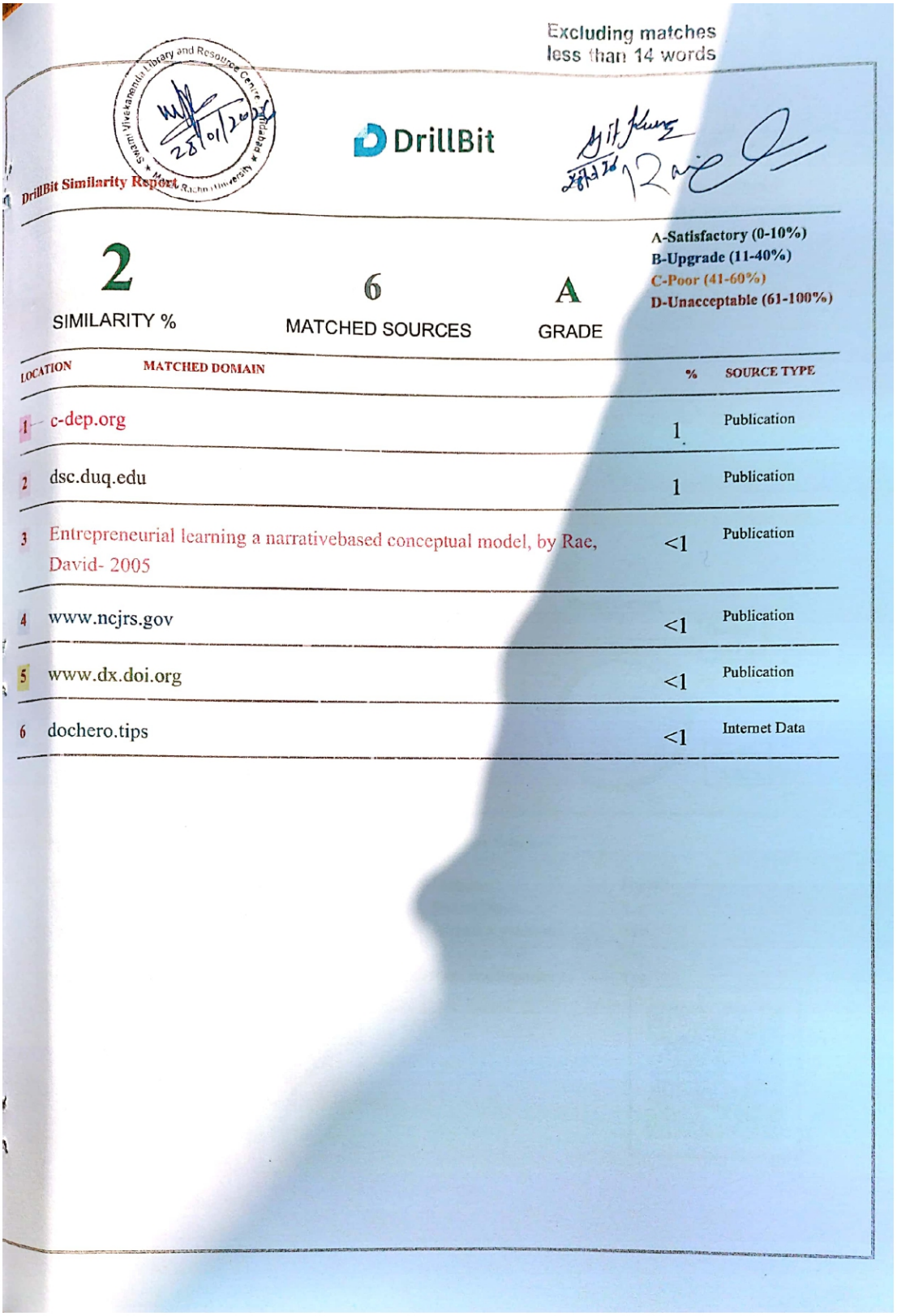

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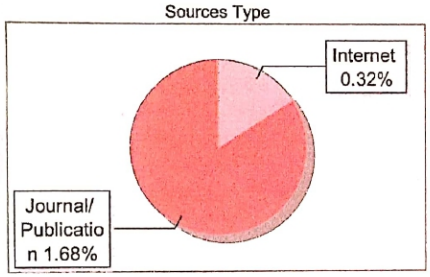

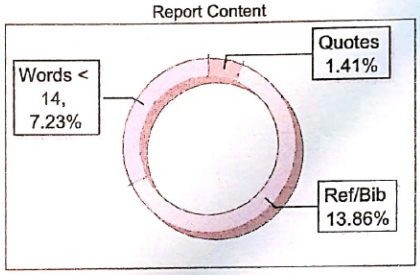

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